

# **JANE ADDAMS PEACE ASSOCIATION** **LEARN AND DO READING GUIDE**

## **BLACK IS A RAINBOW COLOR** **BY ANGELA JOY**

### **2021 JANE ADDAMS CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARD HONOR TITLE**

This Learn and Do Reading Guide is intended to help teachers, librarians, and family members facilitate important, genuine reflection, dialogue, and inspiration for action among young people as they read this commended title together or on their own.

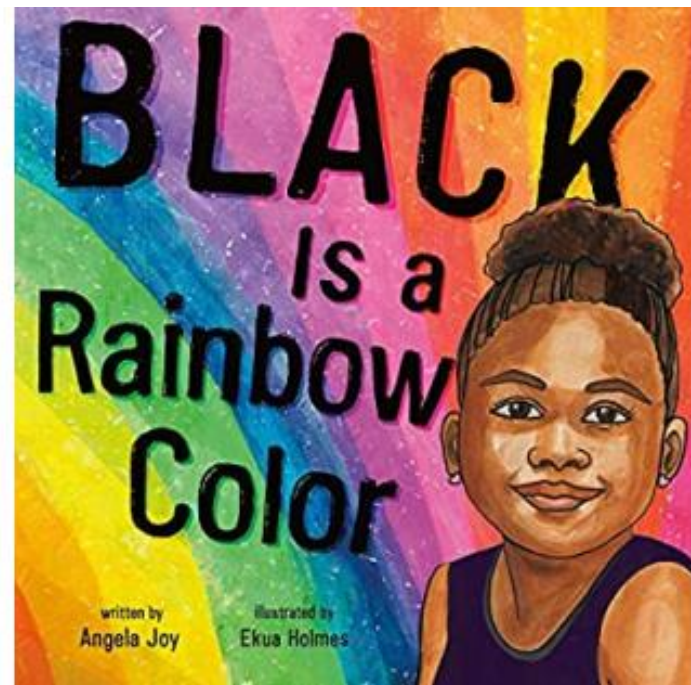
If the adult is reading aloud, the commentary can be shared and the questions posed as seems fit in the process. If young people are reading independently, Building Background and Reflection can be discussed with an adult before and after reading. Dialogue Questions could be assigned for written consideration while reading, with discussion afterward. All or just a few prompts and questions can be utilized. In all cases, conversation about the book is key.

In a group setting, children can be asked to turn to someone nearby to consider a question before several young people share with the whole group. It is so important that young people share their own perspective and learn about others' as well. Here are some useful sentence starters for students extending each other's thinking; When you said...I thought/I wondered...Before I read this I thought...now I think.... This makes me feel....because....

For more information see our [Learn & Do Curriculum Guidelines](#)

The [Jane Addams Children's Book Award](#) annually recognizes children's books of literary and aesthetic excellence that effectively engage children in thinking about peace, social justice, global community, and equity for all people.

Jane Addams wrote, "Peace would no longer be an absence of war, but the unfolding of worldwide processes making for the nurture of human life." She saw the fostering of "sympathetic knowledge" as the building block of peace. (Newer Ideals of Peace - 1907). In modern terms, the award criteria asks, "How can people work with compassion, empathy, and activism to advance Jane Addams's belief that achieving true peace means more than ending war; it means ensuring justice for all people?" "Sympathetic knowledge," compassion, empathy, and activism are the distinguishing features of peace-building that we seek to emphasize in our reading guides.



# BEFORE READING:

## Adults:

With a pre-read and examination of the back matter in *Black is a Rainbow Color*, you will see that this book is a vital cultural mirror or window for any child from five on into their teens, regardless of ethnic or cultural identity. For all age children, there are elements of the back matter that will enrich and expand their reading experience. (Don't miss the playlist!)

Re-read Angela Joy's author note in the back section before sharing this book with children. You may also want to view and listen to Angela introduce the book in this trailer: [\*Black Is A Rainbow Color\* by Angela Joy; illustrated by Ekua Holmes](#)

## Young Readers:

Before you begin, take a picture walk! Look at each spread in order. What are you noticing about the artwork? What words are jumping out at you at first glance? Notice the color of the front and back pages. What are you wondering about the colors, word and illustration of the title page?

## SPREADS 1, 2 & 3

("RED IS A RAINBOW COLOR" THROUGH "BLACK ARE THE BRAIDS...")

## Building Background:

**What do we know about, what can be learned going in?**

- These three spreads are from a young Black girl's perspective. Be ready to identify with her or to use your imagination to see through her eyes.

## Dialogue

**Spaces for conversation throughout the book**

- What does the girl seem to be thinking and feeling on each spread? Does her mood appear to change over the three illustrations? How? What makes you think yes or no?
- Why do you think she says, "my color is black...and there's no BLACK in rainbows?"

## Reflect

**Deeper dive or looking as a whole. How does this change your feeling/thinking?**

- What role does the color black play in the pictures in this section?
- Look around where you are sitting. What do you see that is black? Where is it?
- Make a short list of what Black means to you and share it with others.

# SPREADS 4, 5 & 6

("SPIT SHINED SHOES" THROUGH "HUSH NOW, DON'T EXPLAIN")

## Building Background

**What do we know about, what can be learned going in?**

- Angela Joy's daughter said to her, "But, Mama, we're not black, we're brown." Angela wrote this book because she wanted her daughter, and all children, to understand that Black is not only a color but a culture. Culture is all the ways of living of a people including arts, beliefs, connections and accomplishments that are passed down from generation to generation. In this section, we can sense the motion, the music and the beauty of Black culture.

## Dialogue

**Spaces for conversation throughout the book**

- With a careful examination of the details of each illustration and their connection with the words, what are you noticing? What are you wondering?
- Now is the time to investigate the More about Black is a Rainbow Color pages! What can you learn that you didn't know before? What do you wish you knew more about?

## Reflect

**Deeper dive or looking as a whole. How does this change your feeling/thinking?**

- A symbol is anything that hints at something else, usually something abstract, such as an idea or belief. Find a symbol in the words and/or pictures on each of these spreads. What do you think your chosen symbol is hinting at?

# SPREADS 7 & 8

("BLACK IS THE SKILLET..." THROUGH "BLACK IS THE COLOR OF INK...")

## Building Background

**What do we know about, what can be learned going in?**

- It is important, for those old enough to do so, to read or have read to them the poems by Langston Hughes and Paul Laurence Dunbar on the green spread in the back of the book and then look at Spreads 7 & 8.

## Dialogue

**Spaces for conversation throughout the book**

- Before reading "What happens to a dream deferred?" what did you think and wonder about spread 7? After reading the poem, what changed in your thinking and why?
- "We Wear the Mask" and "Sympathy" were written by a well educated Black author who was never given a job to match his intellect and skill. After reading his poems, and re-examining spread 8, what image or idea from these pages speaks most strongly to you and why?

## Reflect

**Deeper dive or looking as a whole. How does this change your feeling/thinking?**

- How are spreads 7 & 8 different from the spreads 4, 5 & 6? How is the content different or the mood and feeling? Why do you think this is so?
- How has your idea of Black culture changed since you began reading this book? What did you used to think and what are you thinking now? Why?

# SPREADS 9,10 & 11

(“BLACK IS HISTORY” THOUGH “BLACK WAS THE MAN...”)

## Building Background

**What do we know about, what can be learned going in?**

- Bring what you know about the Modern Civil Rights Movement to this section. If possible, read about the “Stones Bearing Witness to Prayer” and “The Man Who Gave the World His Dream” sections of the More About in the back of the book. Notice the emphasis on women’s parts throughout this historical recounting.

## Dialogue

**Spaces for conversation throughout the book**

- How is “Black is history. Black is family.” illustrated in each of these spreads?
- What do you notice about and what do you wonder about the many people shown on the spread with Martin Luther King?

## Reflect

**Deeper dive or looking as a whole. How does this change your feeling/thinking?**

- What does “Black is faith in a freedom not seen.” mean in the context of this section and this book so far? What does it mean to you?

# SPREADS 12,13 & 14

(“BLACK IS THE HEART...” THROUGH “SO YOU SEE...”)

## Building Background

**What do we know about, what can be learned going in?**

- This section depicts the strength in protest over time and celebrates Black culture in lively and personal ways. Be ready to notice your connections with the words and illustrations.

## Dialogue

**Spaces for conversation throughout the book**

- What is “the heart of a candle and flame?” How might that be connected to “the power of movement in pain?”
- Though the child is alone on the swing in spread 13, for the first time the words say “Black is **our** color.” Why do you think that is?

## Reflect

**Deeper dive or looking as a whole. How does this change your feeling/thinking?**

- If the girl in the last spread is the same girl as in the first spread, how do you think she changed? How might her thinking have changed? How might her feelings have changed? Why?
- There is no black in rainbows and black is a rainbow color. How can this be? (Hint: remember that black is the mixture of all colors.)
- In this same last spread, there is a list of verbs describing the black branches that carry the girl. Find at least four verbs ending in ‘ing’ that depict your feelings about Black culture after reading this book.

# CALL TO ACTION

**Who do you want to talk to about this issue or topic? Why is this book important for kids to read or have read to them? Who do you want to share it with?**

- Research one of the four women depicted in the stain glass on spread 10. Share with your friends what she did and why you think she could be called a ‘godmother of the movement’. Think of one way you are like her and one way you wish to become like her.
- The book ends with “Black is a rainbow, too.” Do you see yourself in this Black rainbow? What can you do to celebrate your Black culture? How does seeing yourself in this way change what you might say or do in your everyday living?
- Do you see others in the Black rainbow? What can you do to show you see and appreciate Black culture? How does seeing this in others change what you might say or do in your everyday living?
- Carefully study A Timeline of Black Ethnonyms in America. Have a conversation and share what you learned from the timeline with family members.
- Create the color black with paints joining together. Show the separate colors before they merge.
- Make a list of ten of the most beautiful things you can think of that are black. Maybe it will be the start of a poem or art piece! Be sure to share your creation.
- Talk to family members about the cultures to which you belong—ethnic, church, sports, school, regional, and national. Create a poem and/or drawing that depicts a culture of which you are a part.

## Additional Inquiry & Resources

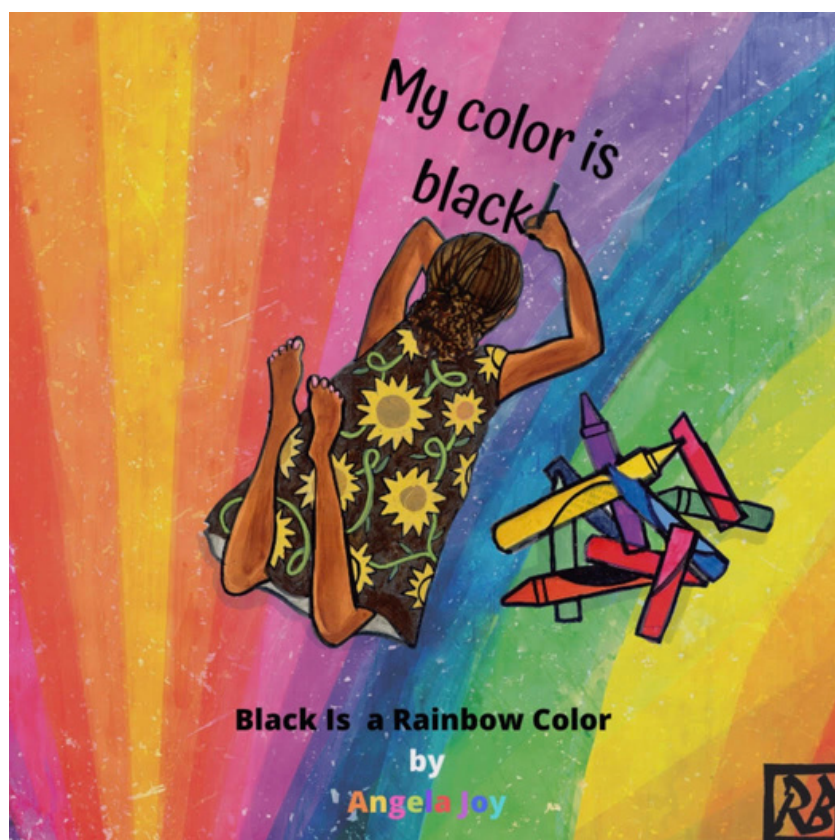
**These can be used to build further background and/or deepen understanding**

- [Angela Joy’s Website](#)
- [Ekua Holmes Website](#)
- [Angela Joy and Ekua Holmes Accepting the Jane Addams Children’s Book Award](#)
- Angela Introducing and reading the book: [Our Shelves: Black is a Rainbow Color](#)
- The Playlist created by Angela Joy for *Black is a Rainbow Color*:
  - [Homeless](#) - Ladysmith Black Mombazo with Paul Simon
  - [Lift Every Voice and Sing](#) - Committed
  - [Blowin in the Wind](#) - Bob Dylan
  - [A Change is Gonna Come](#) - Sam Cooke
  - [Say it Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud](#) - James Brown
  - [To Be Young, Gifted and Black](#) - Nina Simone
  - [What’s Going On](#) - Marvin Gaye
  - [Someday We’ll All Be Free](#) - Donny Hathaway
  - [Shining Star](#) - Earth, Wind & Fire
  - [Blackbird](#) - Dionne Farris
  - [Glory](#) - John Legend and the Common



# Related Jane Addams Children's Book Award Honored Titles

- *Choosing Brave: How Mamie Till-Mobley and Emmett Till Sparked the Civil Rights Movement* by Angela Joy and Janelle Washington
- *Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* by Doreen Rappaport and Bryan Collier
- *Legacy: Women Poets of the Harlem Renaissance* by Nikki Grimes
- *Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down*  
by Andrea Davis Pinkney and Brian Pinkney
- *Lillian's Right to Vote: A Celebration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965* by Jonah Winter and Shane W. Evans
- *New Shoes* by Susan Lynn Meyer and Eric Velasquez
- *The Talk: Conversations about Race, Love & Truth* by Wade Hudson, Cheryl Willis Hudson, and Torrey Maldonado
- *The Book Itch: Freedom, Truth, and Harlem's Greatest Bookstore* by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson and R. Gregory Christie
- *Brave. Black. First.: 50+ African American Women Who Changed the World* by Cheryl Willis Hudson and Erin K. Robinson



Susan Freiss spent the heart of her career co-creating and teaching in a 4/5 multiage community within a public school. She currently creates curriculum and teaches middle school reading, writing, and higher order thinking part time. She has served on the Jane Addams Book Award Selection Committee and Peace Association Board. Susan lives in Madison, Wisconsin.